



Representative **Joel Kretz**

7th Legislative District

February 2006

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2006 Legislative session began on January 9. And, just as I went to Olympia last year with your message of job growth and health care reform, fiscal restraint and budget responsibility, I have done so again this year.

This year, we will undoubtedly address the \$1.4 billion surplus in the state's operating budget. With the record-setting spending and tax increases of last session, the pressure will be on legislators to fund new programs, create a bigger and more intrusive government and look for ways to make sure government is growing. The unnecessary tax hikes of last year must be addressed. And, before we make government any larger, we should make our business community and private job-base larger and more diverse.

My goal will be to make sure that any "windfall" we have in our state's budget is placed in a 'rainy day' fund should we see another downturn in our economy. We must fund vital services, but just like you must spend your household budget in a responsible way, government should be as responsible when spending your money.

I am proud of the positive progress I made last year having three vital bills passed and signed into law. The bridge I built across the isle to inform and educate urban legislators on rural area issues is something I will build upon this year as we debate the budget, health care, agricultural issues and others. We won't agree on everything, but given the chance, I will explain our district's unique agricultural and rural issues as well as our need for economic development.

As part of your 7th District Legislative team I am here to serve your interests and am pleased that you have chosen me to be your messenger in Olympia.

I always like to hear what you think about issues impacting our area and the state, so please feel free to contact me at any of my numbers listed or, if you make it to Olympia, stop by my office!

Sincerely,

Joel Kretz
State Representative



Rep. Joel Kretz

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2006 Legislative Preview

COMMITMENT TO WASHINGTON

Tackling tough issues in 2006

My commitment to you is that I will work on issues that impact families, communities, farms and businesses in our area and around the state. While we have many tough issues to tackle in 2006, here's a list of the top few:

Save our budget surplus for a 'rainy day': The economic indicators are pointing to a \$1.4 billion surplus in the state's revenues. While I could not be more pleased that the rest of our state is finally on the upswing of a dragging economy, the 7th district is still lagging behind the rest of the state. I worry that lawmakers will start writing checks that further stress our area's economy instead of saving for a possible downturn in the economy.

Last month, the governor announced her supplemental spending plan; one that will raise this biennium's record-setting spending increase from 12 percent to 16.3 percent over last biennium. As it is, if the rate of spending continues to grow at its current pace, the state will face at least a \$1 billion budget deficit in less than two years.

We must protect our surplus, save for a 'rainy day' and take a look at last year's record tax increases to see where we can give our state's citizens some tax relief. And, we must fully fund the state pension system. We have an obligation to the citizens to be good stewards of your tax dollars — I plan to start by fighting for fiscal responsibility.

Reinstate I-601 spending limits: Last year's budget debate was not all about taxes; it was about the voter-passed spending limits imposed by Initiative 601.

In 1993 voters, fed up with an ever-growing government and its appetite for spending passed I-601. The initiative set caps on government spending and limited the

amount and scope of tax increases the Legislature could rest at the taxpayer's feet without a super-majority vote of both the House and Senate.

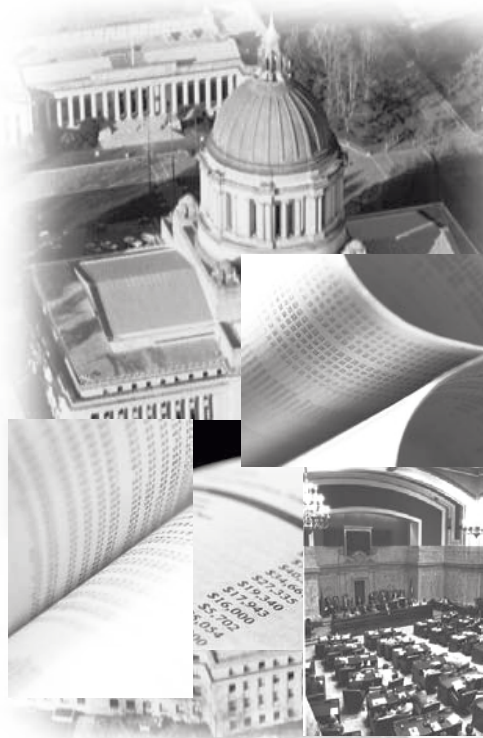
We voters deserve a lot of credit as we foretold what came to pass last session; a taxing and spending package unrivaled by any other Legislature in more than a decade. The 12 percent state spending increase (*soon to be 16.3 percent and rising*) and \$400 million in new taxes (*excluding transportation taxes*) was bad enough, but changing the super-majority vote requirement to a simple-majority vote to raise taxes basically snubbed the wishes of the voters. The end result of overturning I-601 is that it makes it far easier for the Legislature to reach for your wallet every budget cycle; exactly what voters did not want to happen.

To add insult to injury, legislators added "emergency clauses" to almost 100 bills with a fiscal impact. Bills with an emergency provision override the voters' ability to overturn the tax or spending bill by a referendum to the people. This is an irresponsible way to budget and is wholly unfair to voters.

Washington's Constitution allows for citizen action, via the initiative and referendum process, to prevent and/or correct government actions overriding the will of the people. The Legislature should honor the voters of the state and reinstate the provisions set forth in I-601 and protect

the taxpayers from another record-setting tax and spend budget.

Address high energy costs: In the first three days of session, I was pleased to see the overwhelming support for families and family farms as the House passed important measures to reduce farm fuel and home heating costs,



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HB 2424 and HB 2370. House Bill 2370 also passed the Senate and was signed by the governor.

Passing these two critical bills was a good first step to help families plan their budget around food, shelter and livelihood — not whether they can afford to heat their home and fuel their farm equipment. And, this vital assistance to families is not funded by taxpayers dollars — it's funded solely by a state settlement.

My agenda for the 60-day session will continue to be focused on bills that help families, farmers and local small businesses in the 7th district and statewide. And, addressing energy costs at every level is critical for area families.

One proposal that I am currently working would allow for natural gas and oil exploration so that we can slowly ease our way to being more energy independent. I will also take a look at the several biodiesel bill proposals that are before the legislature this year. I would welcome this type of new job base in our agricultural community, but I want to make sure that it doesn't raise already-high fuel prices, burden the taxpayers with an industry that cannot sustain itself and that after the state's initial investment, the industry is self-sustained.

All options to lower fuel and energy costs are on the table and I will look at each of them to make sure they are good for our district and our state.

2006 Bill proposals

Lowering energy costs with innovative solutions

Part of the reason energy bills are so high is that a portion of every family's energy bill has an added charge allocated to salmon recovery. In fact, the state estimates spending an additional \$125 million in a three-county area in north central Washington for salmon recovery efforts which will further escalate the cost of home heating and energy for area families.

As part of lowering energy costs, I proposed House Bill 2381 allowing landowners with room to spare the ability to relocate unwanted beavers to their land. We know beavers can greatly improve water storage in the upper watersheds, and it won't cost the state a dime.

While my bill would not require any landowner to host a beaver on their property, this measure would allow private citizens to obtain a free permit, then catch beavers that others consider troublesome and relocate them to the permit holder's land.



This is an issue that I know is vital to rural landowners, like me, seeking to improve water storage on their property. And, it's an issue I have been working on with the state Department of Fish and Wildlife for the past several years. I believe that my bill is a good solution to water storage issues as well as an innovative way to trim energy bills a little more.

Local governments should have control of tapping visitor dollars

Improving the local economies by allowing recreation visitors to spend money in area towns is vital to keeping the small businesses in our communities open for business. And, making sure that local communities tap visitor dollars is a top priority.

My legislation allowing local designation of roads for off-road vehicles to drive into towns to eat and buy fuel is one way to ensure that money spent in our state's recreation areas benefits local services paid for by tax dollars and small businesses.

There are already many roads designated for off-road vehicles on the outskirts of towns, but roads leading to local businesses are off-limits making it difficult for visitors to spend money in the towns surrounding active recreation areas.

My bill solves that problem by giving local governments complete control to decide which roads, if any, would be labeled off-road vehicle-friendly. Allowing visitors to travel into town on a few roads would generate local revenue and help small businesses.

This bill would simply allow local government flexibility to tap tourism dollars.

2006 Legislative Preview

Local Students can serve as pages

Each Legislative session offers opportunities for students ages 14 through 17 to serve as a page in the state-house.

Pages are an important part of the legislature as they help deliver documents to legislators in their offices, committee meetings and in the House chamber during floor sessions. Pages also attend "page school" during their week of service at the capitol as well as learn about the legislative process.



Pages must fit the age requirement of 14-17, have a C+ or better grade average and obtain written permission from their parents and school.

To learn more about the House Page Program, log on to www.leg.wa.gov or contact my office at 360-786-7988.

Staying involved:

There are plenty of ways to stay involved and informed on issues in the Legislature that impact you:

The Internet:

State Government: www.access.wa.gov

Legislative Information: www.hrc.leg.wa.gov

Understanding the legislative process:

- Go to the House of Representatives' website: www1.leg.wa.gov/house/
- Click on 'General Info'
- There you will find the "Guide to Effective Legislative Participation" and information on how a bill becomes a law as well as the legislative process as a whole

Need information or assistance?

Whether the Legislature is in session or not, I represent you all year. I encourage you to contact me if you need assistance, a speaker for your event or to give me your feedback on an issue important to you.

Please remember that legislators are elected to serve you! If you are facing challenges working with a state agency or other regulatory challenge, please feel free to contact me to see how I can help. I can be reached in Olympia at (360) 786-7988.



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2006 Legislative Session Preview

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